

Ailey Dances Spill Over

By JENNIFER DUNNING

DANCES came spilling out of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on Saturday night at the City Center. Not content with a program of five pieces by such choreographers as Mr. Ailey, George Faison and Joyce Trisler, the company added a John Butler solo at the last minute. And buried in that cornucopia was "Icarus," Lucas Hoving's retelling of the Greek myth, set to a score by Shin-ichi Matsushita, which was seen on Saturday for the first time this season.

In its stylized compression of plot, "Icarus" resembles José Limón's "The Moor's Pavane," in which Mr. Hoving created the Iago-derived role. The Hoving trio also brings to mind the surface simplicity and symbolic underpinnings of Japanese Noh theater.

Icarus breaks continually from his father to explore the stage space in running, jumping circles until, at the measured entrance of the Sun, both fall to the ground, worshipful and blinded. The Sun's path takes her center-stage, where she turns slowly, long robes

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twisting about her, and Icarus is drawn inexorably toward her. He crawls and tumbles in a final circle about her feet and, as she leaves the stage, his limp body is lifted legs first by his despairing father in one of those transcendent poses of created dance.

When performed with the right weighted economy of gesture, "Icarus" is a stunning work. Only Clive Thompson as Daedalus came close to the ideal. Masazumi Chaya danced well enough in the title role, his body stretching and crumpling into the dance's taut calligraphy, but he lacked the necessary driven quality. Donna Wood was a pretty, properly solemn sun but she is not yet a seasoned enough character dancer to make the most of the role and she was hampered by a fussy costuming, as is the production in general.

Sun ray projections needlessly decorate the orange circle of light on the backdrop and with Beni Montresor's costumes a note of sumptuousness has crept in that is not only inappropriate but also destroys the dance's miraculous sense of a teeming universe reduced to its stark essentials. Gussied up, "Icarus" is only diminished.



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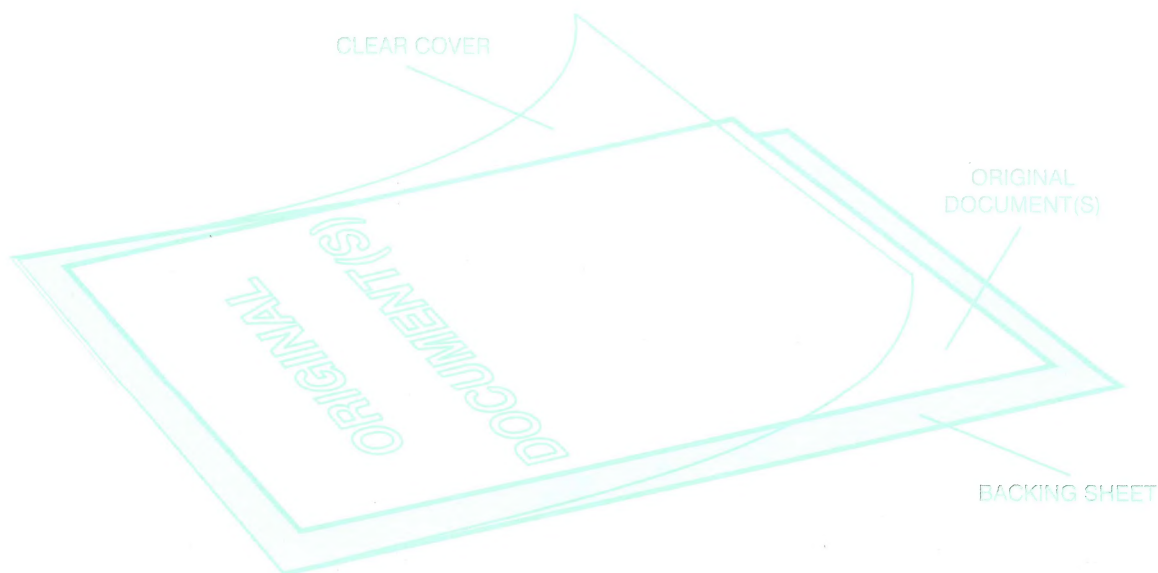
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By JENNIFER DUNNING

Twentieth anniversary? It feels more like our 100th!" A lean and child-selected Alvin Ailey sank into his chair, playing his real-life role of weary company director with huge enjoyment. Nothing would be ready on time. A lead dancer had just developed mysterious stomach pains. There were torn tendons and bruised egos. Twentieth anniversary? It could have been any season, and any company.

But the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 20 years old this fall, has a special place in the world of dance. While it has been determinedly interracial, the company has given work to many young black dancers and choreographers in otherwise lean times. Its lively mix of Broadway, ballet and numerous modern-dance styles and its blending of low humor and high excitement are unique, and whole new audiences have suddenly found themselves at dance concerts as a result.

The company has its share of stars, among them a lady named Judith Jamison on whom Mr. Ailey took a chance over a decade ago, and enough promising youngsters to encourage the time-honored pastime of spotting the stars of the future. But most of all, the company has earned its place in American modern dance history as one of the earliest and most successful of repertory companies.

It did start out, however, as a gleam in a young choreographer's eye and, rooted in the relatively unfamiliar tradition of Lester Horton, the influential Los Angeles choreographer, the Ailey company has real ties with modern dance's past. It may be that the free-wheeling creative atmosphere Mr. Horton established around him gave Mr. Ailey a feel for practically that

The Alvin Ailey Blend—Ballet, Modern and Broadway

has kept the company going through some very hard times.

"Lester encouraged you to choreograph, teach, dye fabrics, paint scenery, make paper and clay sculpture, appreciate American Indians and blacks and love people inside for what they were. He was a humanist. A relaxed man, but he created an environment that was so freely creative. Everyone hung around there. The costume room was always open. You went shopping with him, teaching with him, you had dinner with him up at his house because he loved to cook.

"Lester left an enormous imprint on us all — me, James Truitte, Janet Collins, the actress Lella Goldoni. . . . He turned Rudi Gernreich, who was a member of his company, to design and he told Carmen De Lavallade she must study ballet, too. And when Joyce Trisler came to Lester, for instance, she was just a crazy floppy girl from down the street, though she was always as loose as a goose when she moved. Lester was all giving."

The contact with Mr. Horton had come in 1949 when Mr. Ailey was an 18-year-old transplanted Texan with a facility for gymnastics and vague but positive feelings about dance. It was an on-again-off-again training period and Mr. Horton died in 1953, shortly after Mr. Ailey started to work intensively with him and create his first dances. The company split up and Mr. Ailey found himself in charge. "There was a lot of *chazzeri*, and one day someone



Mr. Ailey rehearses his company for its Nov. 29 opening.

Lois Greenfield

said, 'Does anyone here want to choreograph?'"

He barely had time to cut his teeth as a company director and resident choreographer before being summoned to

New York in 1954 with Miss De Lavallade to appear in the Broadway musical "House of Flowers."

"I began to study with Karel Shook.

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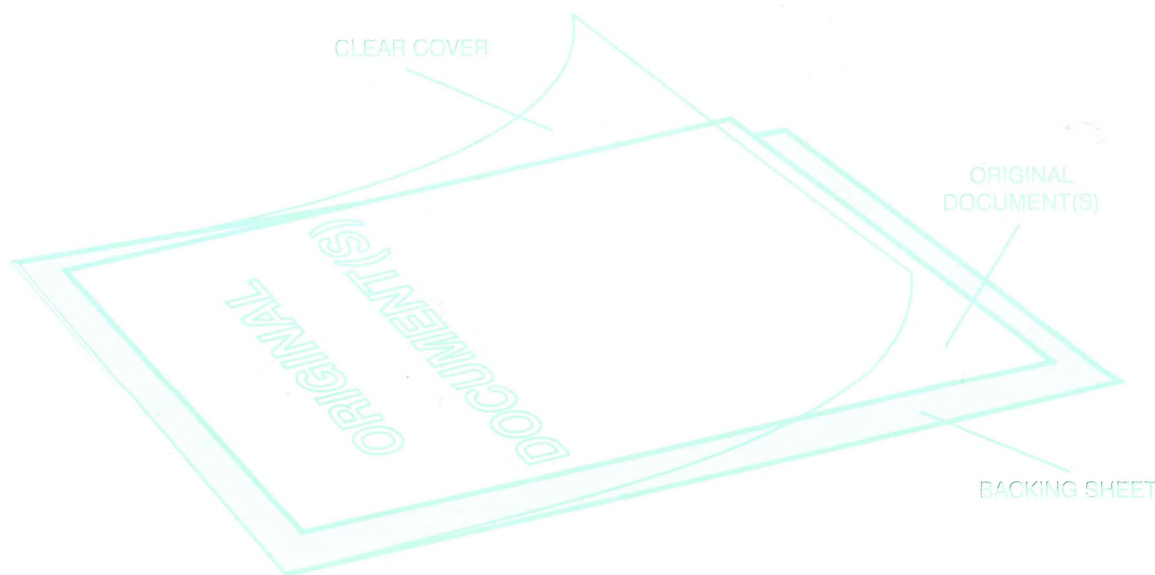
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The Ailey Blend

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Hanya Holm, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey — I was trying to see what New York modern dance was like, to see what I'd only read about. I met and started to do concerts with Sophie Maslow, Donald McKayle and Anna Sokolow. Those were the days when the YMHA was really jumping. Dear old Dr. [William] Kolodney [former cultural program director at the YMHA] had made a personal commitment to dance, and there were concerts at least three nights a week.

"I did shows. There was a calypso show with Geoffrey Holder at the Brooklyn Paramount — or was it the Fox? — where I danced with Maya Angelou."

The whole idea, however, was to choreograph. "And, because of Lester, I had to be a great designer of costumes and scenery and lighting, as well as a great choreographer. I had no idea of continuing after the first concert. I thought, 'I'll give one and see what happens.' Concerts were all the vogue in the 1950's. When you had money from working in a musical you gave a concert, so Ernest Parham and I did one at the YMHA in 1958, with Talley Beatty as guest choreographer. Talley and Donald McKayle were our role models for blacks giving concerts. I did have certain black things on my mind so I did 'Blues Suite,' which comes from my childhood, and a solo dedicated to Lester. That first concert was a success, not only critically but creatively. It felt good, coming together, though I remember losing a lot of money. I think I was paying bills well into the 1960's."

The company danced very sporadically after that, growing and shrinking and disbanding and regrouping between its one or two performances a year. The turnover was dizzying, with new dancers, spotted in friends' concerts or in musicals or at class, joining performers willing to rehearse — unpaid — at all hours and receive little more for actual performances.

The YWCA's Clark Center for the Performing Arts came to Mr. Ailey's aid with rehearsal and performance facilities and moral support. "There was always this crunch for work space in the 1950's. Mostly we went to Michael's Studio, which is still there on Eighth Avenue in the 40's. Talley made 'The Road of the Phoebe Snow' there and I think I made 'Revelations.' Hanya Holm had a studio there, too."

A wildly successful European tour in 1964 brought the Ailey dancers scattered offers of college tours in America, but it was the foreign tours that brought them their real acclaim. It was a catch-as-catch-can affair. Through

shrewd political acumen, Mr. Ailey engineered a State Department-sponsored tour of North Africa in 1970 that kept the company together until it could make a planned tour of Russia — also sponsored by the State Department — that proved to be a high point in the company's history.

There had been brief but well-attended appearances at Hunter College, the Billy Rose theater and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, but a 1971 appearance at the ANTA theater marked a turning point for the company. "For some reason, we were really very popular there. It was a whole different scene. I remember looking out and thinking, 'Oh, my God, a theater audience.' Also, the dance boom was coming at that time." The following year the company performed at City Center, where it will open this Wednesday to run through December 17.

The Ailey company has grown from seven to 27 dancers, and it has an active repertory of 28 works. There are also two junior companies which, with the large Ailey dance school, are currently being re-quartered in studios at Broadway's Minskoff theater complex.

Critical reception has taken on a perhaps inevitable edge in recent years with comments — by some white critics — that the Ailey company has "sold out" the black experience and become too commercialized. But its audiences keep growing, though Mr. Ailey is disappointed that he is not attracting as many "ordinary" people as he set out to. "The ticket prices now drive me crazy," he said, shaking his head. "Our first tickets cost \$2.00, which was a lot then. Our top is now \$14.00."

"I always wanted to be a popular company, a company with appeal to the people who went to movies and rock concerts and theater in general. I guess basically I'm a vaudevillian. I'd love to play a week of repertory at the Apollo. I always felt I must take dance to the people, especially blacks, who do not feel so welcome in the elite halls of City Center and Lincoln Center, who do not go downtown. I want to have the kind of company that plays in the boondocks and has people saying, 'Yes, I dig this.' Those are the kinds of people I come from. I think that's why 'Blues Suite' and 'Revelations' have lasted so well. They are popular in the best sense of the word."

The anniversary season will include a bow both to that intimate and more personal past and to a future that belongs to a new breed of dancers and choreographers. There will be revivals of Mr. Beatty's "Congo Tango Palace" and "Toccata," both from the 1950's. And in an opening night gala program, highlights from the company's most popular dances will be performed by a

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cast of current and former company members. The names of those who are expected to be present reads like a Who's Who of black dance, among them Miss De Lavallade, Mr. Truitte, Hope Clarke, Kelvin Rotardier, Sylvia Waters, Mary Barnett, George Faison, Miguel Godreau, Dorene Richardson, William Louthier, John Parks, Hector Mercado, Charles Moore, Nat Horne and Altovise Gore Davis. Liz Williamson, a member of the first Ailey company, will be on hand to read a tribute to Pearl Primus, Katherine Dunham and Beryl McBurnie, whom Mr. Ailey describes as "the force behind West Indian dance." "There will be presentations of one thing or another," he added. "Anyway, I think it's going to be a nice time together."

The season will also include a new dance by Margo Sappington based on the Greek legend of Medusa and starring Miss Jamison and Dudley Williams, as well as Clive Thompson and Mari Kajiwaru. A second new work will be by Gene Hill Sagan, a choreographer who left the United States in the 1950's to tour with a black classical ballet company and who has most recently worked in Israel. The dance is set to Gregorian chant and will be performed by Mr. Thompson, Mr. Williams and Sarita Allen. "Sunrise... Sunset" was done originally for a kibbutz company and it has a mystic air about it," Mr. Ailey said, "as if the choreographer had internalized Moslem, Jewish and black religions and crystalized them into a ritualistic trio."

Whether by chance or by design, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has endured. "It's gotten to be huge, a big monster now. We have a performing schedule that goes through 1980 at the moment. It makes me feel very stressed sometimes. I still haven't learned that I'm not personally responsible for everything. But the company hasn't been an Alvin Ailey feat. There have been strong people like Ivy Clarke [former general manager] behind us — and the dancers, who always give more than you can ever pay."

"The idea of a repertory company came to me because a lot of really wonderful people were making fine dances in the 1950's. Having seen some of those dances dissolve before my eyes gave me the idea that a responsible repertory company could preserve them. Repertory requires a special kind of dancer and I love the idea that it enriches them. And whenever an all-Ailey evening comes up, I find myself thinking the dances may all look like the same work."

"I still have hopes that we will somehow become, or someone will create, a national modern dance repertory company. There should be more subsidization of revivals — of things by Horton, for example, and things like Doris Humphrey's 'With My Red Fires,' a wonderful piece that needs a corps of 16 girls, and 'Trends,' by Hanya Holm."

"But the main thing is tenacity. I feel as if we're always starting from the beginning."



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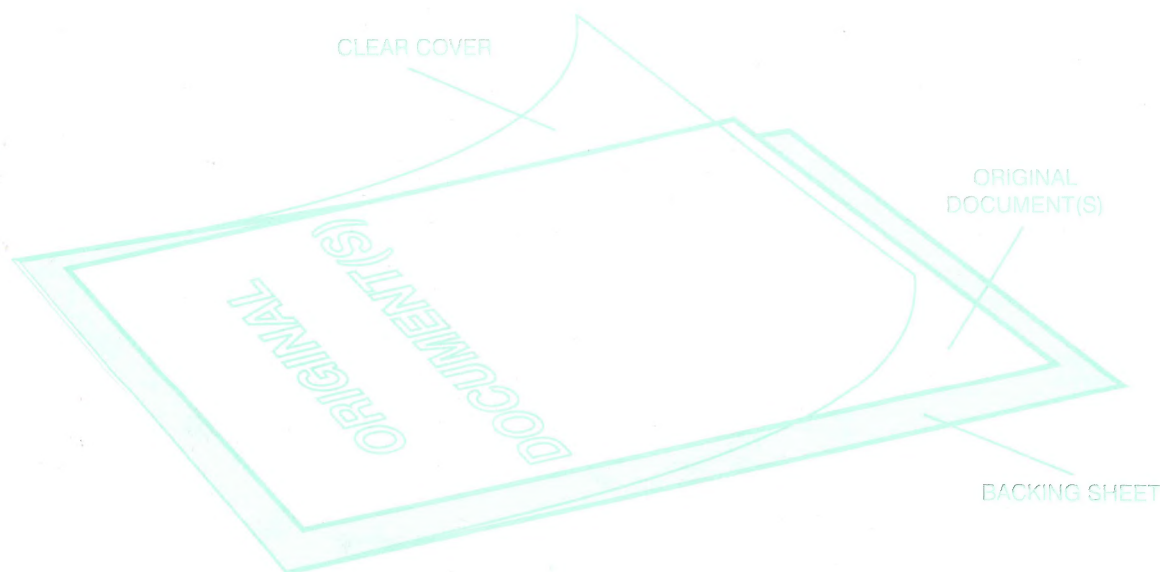
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Dance: Ailey Opens With a Premiere

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

YOU might say the dancing was better than the choreography at Wednesday night's opening of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the City Center-55th Street Dance Theater.

But without the choreography, there obviously wouldn't be all that great dancing to admire for any reason to go as wild as the audience did at the end of a performance that opened a three-week engagement.

This will also be the Ailey company's 20th anniversary season, and Mr. Ailey marked the occasion by creating a world premiere, a solo for Judith Jamison entitled "Passage." Another work new to the company was Rael Lamb's "Butterfly." Two repertory pieces by George Faison, "Gazelle" and the exuberant "Suite Otis," completed the program.

The Ailey company has always been strong on male dancers. But this was Ladies Night, with Miss Jamison as its empress. In "Passage," she even portrays what the program note describes as "the most powerful voodoo queen in the history of this country."

It is hard to discern what barometers are used to measure such powers, but it is interesting to learn that Mr. Ailey sought his inspiration in such a relatively unknown area of American history. Again, according to the program, the figure on stage was based on a woman named Marie Laveau: "Beyond her role as priestess, her influences extended deeply into the social and political fabric of 19th-century New Orleans."

Looking at "Passage," one would say that it was the influence of another priestess—Martha Graham—that affected Mr. Ailey most. With her cloak-like fabrics and allusive gestures from well-known Graham heroines, Miss Jamison was also Clytemnestra, Medea and Joan of Arc—all literally wrapped up into one cpe. c

"Passage" depends not only on her charismatic star presence and the beauty of her long line, but also on the strength of her technique. "Passage" may look simple but it is difficult—with a few exceptions, the dancer is rarely upright.

At the same time, it is a solo with artistic aspirations that are never attained because of the movement vocabulary too limited for the length of the music.

It is easy to see, however, why Mr. Ailey was attracted to "Rituals and Incantations," a very recent score by Hale Smith. With its percussiveness and glissandos, it weaves a spell. In-

cantation is the leitmotif of the choreography, too.

Romare Bearden has made a lintel-like set of platforms for Miss Jamison, who is depicted first in a swath of purple fabric. As she dances later on the floor, she casts her own spell. Always, there is the one bare leg, extended repeatedly from a slit gown, and arms that move constantly. At his best, Mr. Ailey offers a mixture of the mysterious and the familiar in these gestures.

"Passage" is an abstraction. It shows a woman going through stages of development, into a trance and then into rest. She is as affected as those she is trying to affect, and in her concentration and commitment, Miss Jamison carries off a tour de force.

Mr. Lamb, a young choreographer whose work has been seen with the Boston Ballet and several modern-dance companies, has created an impressive, sometimes delicate, piece in "Butterfly." It is plotless, set to a plunky Morton Subotnick score, and uses insect and butterfly imagery as an allegory for human relations.

Yet it is also very strong on compositional designs, aided by Chenault Spence's lighting and some brightly colored leotards. Except for a duet in which Sarita Allen becomes the predatory female destroying Melvin Jones, the male of the species, and the fly-eating finale, Mr. Lamb manages to stay up on a more ethereal wavelength.

But of course, the point may well be his revelation of the true nature of all those beautiful creatures—who included Mari Kajiwaru, Enid Britten, Mel Tomlinson, Maxine Sherman and Keith McDaniel.

George Faison's choreography follows another pulse. "Gazelle" is an elegy about a gazelle captured by African hunters who lose their own liberty in the slave trade. Its jazz style is interspersed with the mimetic leaps and caperings of the beautiful Donna Wood as the personification of the gazelle-free spirit.

"Suite Otis," a big hit since last season, has Mr. Faison taking the jazz idiom into some sophisticated character studies. With its ironies, bitterness and joy about love, accompanied by Otis Redding's songs "Suite Otis" simply zings.

Its street-wise charms pack a wallop and yet remain unusually romantic. The dancers were terrific in two sections: the pelvis-popping strut by Carl Paris, Milton Myers, Masazumi Chaya, Ulysses Dove and Mel Tomlinson, and the corresponding sassy female quintet: Miss Wood, Marilyn Banks, Jodi Moccia, Miss Sherman and Miss Allen. A show-stopping performance by all



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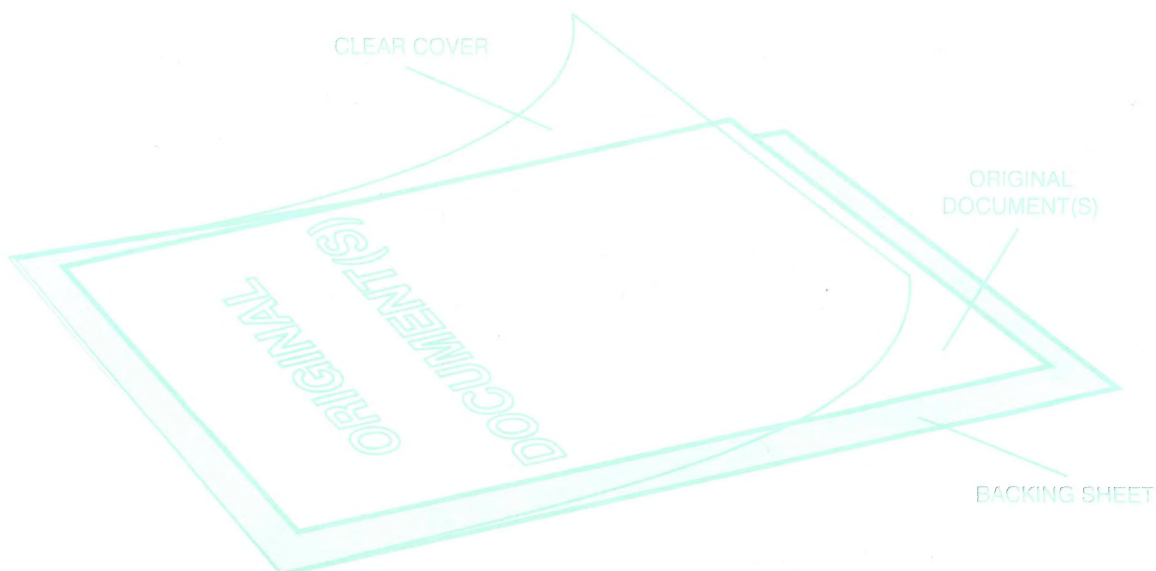
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Dance: Driving Works by Ailey

By JACK ANDERSON

THE Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Saturday matinee and evening performances at City Center contained some of the most substantial works in the company's repertory.

The evening program featured three explosive pieces by Talley Beatty. In "Congo Tango Palace," a depiction of a ballroom in Spanish Harlem, dancers cross the stage in fiercely driving rhythmic patterns to music by Miles Davis and Gil Evans.

The pace is unrelenting, so unrelenting that Mr. Beatty may have had difficulty deciding how to stop. These people, it seems, could dance all night. What finally stops them is the appearance of a woman hanging from a rope, presumably dead. But this conclusion, though shocking, is also gratuitous, for nothing has prepared one for it.

Although "Toccata," to a score by Lalo Schiffrin, contains touches of jazz dancing, it is essentially an abstraction. Yet it is just as propulsive as "Congo Tango Palace." Dancers rush about with such unflagging vitality that they seem parts of a perpetual motion machine.

"The Road of the Phoebe Snow" is simultaneously one of Mr. Beatty's strongest and strangest efforts. Since "Phoebe Snow" is the nickname of a Southern train, one might expect that this piece to music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn might concern life along the railroad tracks. Instead, it is a suite of dances that appears to be abstract. Appearances deceive, however, for as the work proceeds the choreography grows increasingly dramatic until one beholds a lovers' tryst, a fight and a death.

The Ailey dancers gave a vigorous account of "Toccata" and "Congo Tango Palace," although they seemed as bewildered by the latter's conclusion as some viewers may have been. They were equally vigorous, yet less successful, in "The Road of the Phoebe Snow," for they danced it too abstractly throughout, their performances containing few hints that these figures were real people inhabiting a real place. Therefore the melodramatic ending seemed an arbitrary event, rather than the culmination of tensions that had been building from the outset.

Mr. Ailey was represented as a choreographer Saturday evening by his "Reflections in D," a solo to a gentle score by Duke Ellington. The dance is equally gentle. Movements are often languid and rippling, and even when the arms make zig-zags in the air, calm soon returns. Dudley Williams danced the piece with quiet control and Lawrence Wolf was the piano soloist.

Mr. Ailey's robust "Blues Suite" turned up at the matinee. Set to blues songs sung by Brother John Sellers, it evokes old New Orleans. Some episodes

resemble revue sketches or cartoons. One such cartoon — decidedly for grownups — was the duet in which Estelle Spurlock portrayed a sex kitten who first enticed, then scratched at, Ulysses Dove.

Other scenes proved stronger stuff. Donna Wood, Maxine Sherman and Marilyn Banks, as women in a brothel, convincingly revealed that their sultriness was a mask hiding frustration and despair. And while there was swagger to the men's dances, there was also a wariness suggesting that circumstances required these men to be forever on guard.

It was fascinating to see "Blues Suite" followed by Rudy Perez's "Coverage II," for while Mr. Ailey is a choreographic extrovert, Mr. Perez is often called a minimalist. Nevertheless, both "Blues Suite" and "Coverage II" show an awareness of suppressed violence.

A solo to snippets of songs and radio

announcements, "Coverage II," begins with a workman in coveralls pasting tape to the floor. He looks stiff and tense. When he strips to a pair of shorts, his movements become easier. Then everything he does comes to an abrupt halt. He seems perpetually stymied, perhaps because he is afraid of himself or because outside forces oppress him. Donning his coveralls, he removes the tape. Again, he looks tense and the way he crumples the tape suggests that rage smolders within him.

As danced by Mr. Perez in programs by his own company, the solo is enigmatic. On Saturday, Clive Thompson stressed its satirical content, thereby making it an almost overtly political statement. Since he stressed nothing that was not inherent in the choreography, his interpretation was valid.

The matinee also contained a repetition of "Gazelle," and both performances concluded with "Revelations." Joyce Brown conducted.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1978



Kenn Duncan

Clive Thompson



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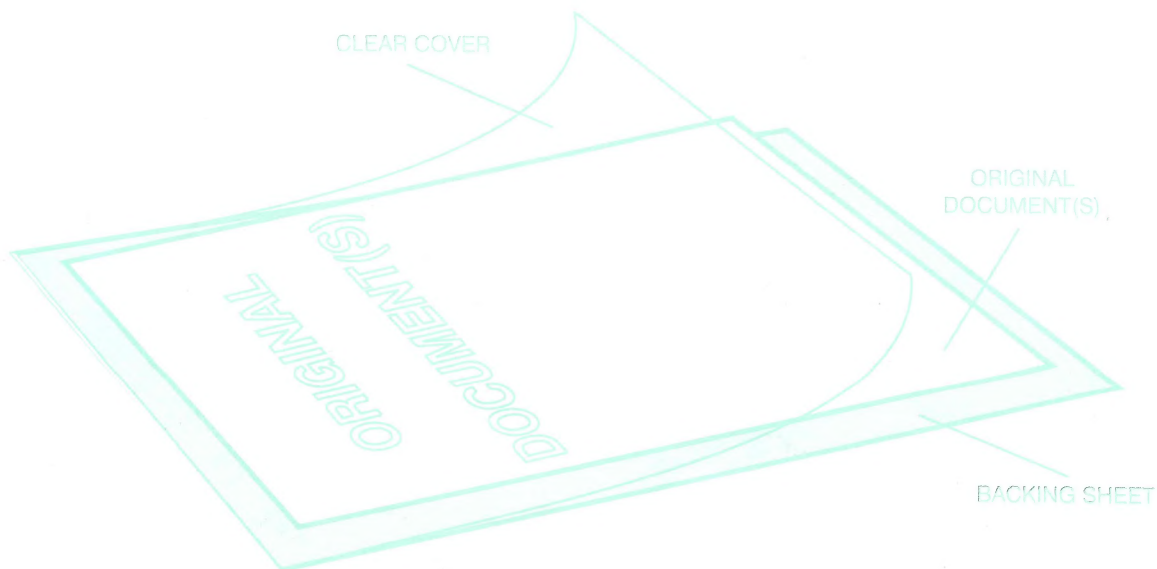
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THE NEW YORK TIMES

Margo Sappington 'Medusa' Given Premiere at the Ailey

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

The Program

"Medusa," a new work by Margo Sappington, had its world premiere with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Friday night at the City Center. It was full of sound and fury and signified nothing.

One is tempted to let matters rest right there, but so many good dancers were involved onstage that even a post-mortem on rigor mortis seems de rigueur. If this mixing of idioms sounds like too much, it also suggests the kind of confusion of idioms that trapped Miss Sappington this time around.

For years, she was saddled with the a single-sensation label as the choreographer of the nude duet in "O Calcutta!" In the meantime, she has done very legitimate choreography and her ballet in tribute to Alexander Calder for the Pennsylvania Ballet showed her to be brimming with good ideas: Where has she gone wrong?

In many ways, she seems out of her depth. She has taken a well known Greek myth and delivered a disco-dance version to a discoish taped score by Michael Kamen. At the same time, she has not really offered a new dimension to the legend that would, Martha Graham-style, illuminate that myth itself or use it to tell us something about ourselves.

Only the program note offers a twist to the story of Perseus and Medusa. Most gorgons in our book, or at least Edith Hamilton's on classical mythology, suggested that they wanted to be left alone. Medusa, the only mortal among these monsters, had snakes as her hair and turned onlookers to stone. When the hero, Perseus, offers to slay Medusa, he is unaware that his mission is a plot to have himself slain.

Miss Sappington's program note insists rather that it is Medusa whom the goddess Athena wants slain because she is jealous of Medusa. The twist is to have Medusa seduce Perseus, and this seduction is the core of the ballet.

Judith Jamison is Medusa, and her first pickup is a mere commoner, danced by Alistair Butler, a member of a chorus that looks as if it has just filed out of a toga party in a singles bar.

MEDUSA (world premiere), choreography, Margo Sappington; commissioned score by Michael Kamen; costume design, Willa Kim; lighting design, Craig Miller. Presented by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the City Center 55th Street Theater.

WITH: Mari Kajiura, Clive Thompson, Dudley Williams, Judith Jamison, Ronni Favors, Sarita Allen, Marilyn Banks, Alistair Butler, Ulysses Dove and Michihiko Oka.

Willa Kim's costumes are even more minimal than the choreography, with a great pitch for economy in the attire designed for Clive Thompson as Perseus and Dudley Williams as Hermes. Mari Kajiura, as Athena, seems to be wearing bifocals, and Miss Jamison, in her mortal phase, looks quite Grecian in a headband and wig until she turns serpent-like in a tongue-baring solo with party streamers on her head.

The program note adds: "The Medusa legend also represents man's paralysis at looking into the face of horrifying realities." Well, yes, but not when the hero gyrates with desire and seems only too keen on gazing into the face of someone named Horrifying Realities.

For a moment, Miss Sappington seemed to pick up in this duet between Mr. Thompson and Miss Jamison, where she began with a variant of an Orpheus and Eurydice situation in which Perseus seemed determined to avoid looking at Medusa. Unfortunately, this device was not sustained and the final simulated beheading was a total dramatic comedown.

Essentially, the fault lies in the lack of sustained tension in the choreography itself. The movements are uninvective. For some reason, Miss Sappington has switched to a dilution of the Ailey style rather than spoken through the more balletic idiom in which she is more at home. It is vocabulary the Ailey dancers could have handled very well and what they are left with they deal with honestly and professionally. In addition to the principals, the other dancers were Ronni Favors, Sarita Allen, Marilyn Banks, Ulysses Dove and Michihiko Oka.

The program opened with Mr. Ailey's "Streams" a plotless piece that comments on various kinds of love but also stresses the formal beauties of



Jack Mitchell

Judith Jamison
Alvin Ailey's enduring star

line. Line, however, was not this cast's strong point, and some shaping up is well in order. The season's first performance of Mr. Ailey's "Cry" came from Donna Wood, a bit too strict in her movements at first but lyrical and vibrant by the end.

Harold Clurman Theater Schedules a Film Cycle

A film cycle consisting of four programs will open Dec. 15 at the Harold Clurman Theater, 412 West 42d Street, with two films by Meredith Monk, the avant-garde choreographer, director and composer. The films, "Quarry" and "Mountain Piece," will be shown from Dec. 15 through 23.

Other programs in the series are Sir Laurence Olivier's "Uncle Vanya" and "The Three Sisters," which will be shown on Dec. 25 and 26; "Crime and Punishment," with Harry Baur, and "The Idiot," with Gerard Philippe, which will be shown Dec. 27 and 28, and the complete "Mummy," consisting of all five classics. This program will be shown Dec. 29, 30 and 31.



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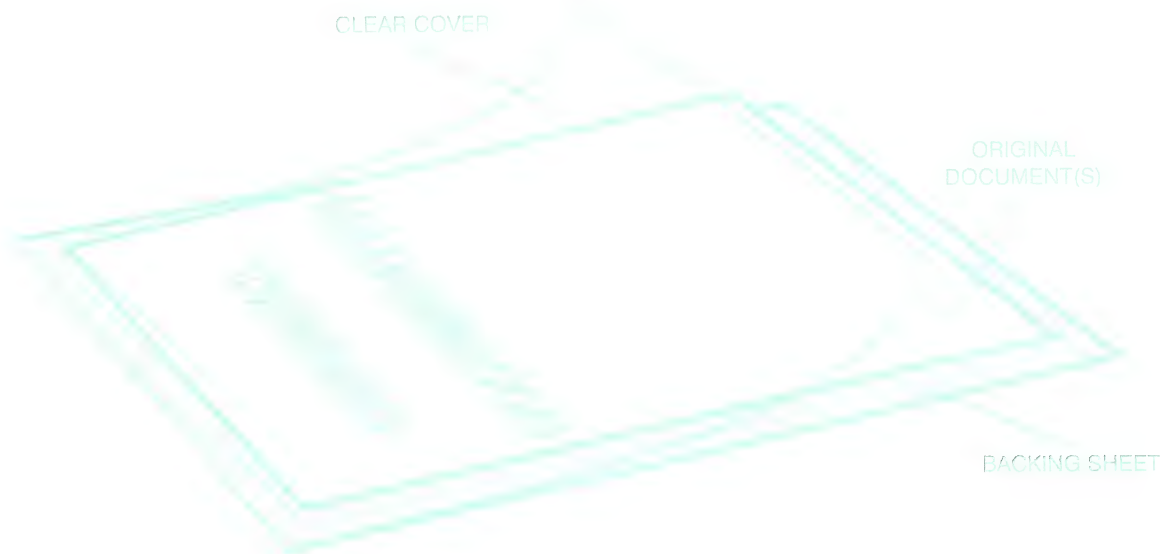
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Reorder Number 099DC

TURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1978

Sagan's 'Sunrise . . . Sunset' Is Danced

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

As an artistic director of a modern-dance company, Alvin Ailey — more than anyone else — has made the repertory concept a working policy. Consistently, he has brought in choreographers other than himself to stage their works or revive classics for his dancers.

Thursday night at the City Center-55th Street Theater, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater presented the New York premiere of "Sunrise . . . Sunset," which introduced the Ailey audience to still another choreographer, Gene Hill Sagan. It was a highly unusual piece, almost an example of sacred dance in its flow of Christian imagery, but certainly a secular work.

Mr. Sagan seems as unusual as his choreography. Originally from Philadelphia, he danced with several companies, including Ballet Americana, which has been described as the first black classical ballet company. For the last 10 years, however, Mr. Sagan has lived in Israel, where he has choreographed for several companies. At the same time, his work has been seen here recently with the Philadelphia Dance

The Program

SUNRISE . . . SUNSET, choreography, Gene Hill Sagan; music, Gregorian chants; lighting, Jeffrey Schissler. Presented by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the City Center-55th Street Theater. WITH: Donna Wood, Sarita Allen and Ulysses Dove.

Company and the Pennsylvania Ballet.

These glimpses suggested that Mr. Sagan was going to come up with a piece in the jazz-dance style the Ailey company itself has made familiar. Instead, "Sunrise . . . Sunset" aspires to a philosophical statement and employs a nonjazz, nonpercussive standard modern-dance idiom. This is not to say that Mr. Sagan has not marked the work with an individual style.

He shows, in fact, a remarkable gift for a fluency of dance phrasing. Repeatedly, one image shifts to another without any sharp break. There is a cinematic quality to this kind of choreography, almost creating the illusion of a camera panning from one figure to another. It is on this formal level that Mr. Sagan is most impressive. He works with a layered perspective, in which his three dancers are seen on totem-pole levels, one above the other, from one on the floor to another on the

knees to a third standing. The dominant style is curvilinear, a silhouette created by crescents of the dancers' arms, echoed in the way they hold their torsos.

There is also a strong triptych motif to his groupings. The dancers, Donna Wood, Ulysses Dove and Sarita Allen, take turns as the central figure. Again, the shifting pattern becomes a motif in itself, and form and content fuse successfully and enigmatically. Successfully, because the way each dancer assumes the role of a Christ figure suggests that this specific devotional imagery can be used for a universal message of love, suffering and compassion. Many of these images suggest the Stations of the Cross, and "Sunrise . . . Sunset" was originally presented last year in Jerusalem.

Yet, if the piece is enigmatic it is because the imagery is too specific to support its overriding abstraction. Miss Wood is the first dancer on stage, and she holds a chalice that is then passed from dancer to dancer after Mr. Dove appears carrying Miss Allen. The sound of church bells gives way to the Gregorian chants that accompany the choreography. The lighting, by Jeffrey Schissler, creates the sunrise and sunset of the various resurrections on stage. The chalice glows, the dancers come in with votive candles. The general idea is clear, individual moments are not. "Sunrise . . . Sunset" loses its long way after the chalice glows for the first time halfway into the work. The choreography becomes suddenly sharper and too distinctly based on the Martha Graham vocabulary. There is a break in tone.

Nonetheless, it is beautifully danced with an extraordinary dignity sustained by Miss Wood as, predominantly, a Mary figure; Miss Allen, an outstanding dancer now coming into her own, and Mr. Dove, who offers a powerful combination of lyricism and strength.

Meanwhile, the contrasts of the Ailey repertory were illustrated by the first performances this season of George Faison's "Hobo Sapiens" and Louis Falco's "Caravan." Dudley Williams did what could be done with a character sketch about a street youth who turns into a hobo. It was good acting.

Judith Jamison led Mr. Falco's bouncy ensemble of units of dancers who jump up and down as Mr. Williams relives a past behind some drop curtains by William Katz. At one time, there seemed a point in trying to figure out what "Caravan" was about. The best advice now is to enjoy the riot of vibrant dancing.

Ballet Quarterly



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Reorder number 099DC

Alvin Ailey Dance Company Encounters Problems on Brazil Tour

By DAVID VIDAL

Special to The New York Times

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 7 — The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, on its first tour of Latin America in 15 years, has been exuberantly received by ebullient audiences in Brazil. Initial backstage friction, however, made the choreographer threaten to cancel his opening night at Rio's municipal theater.

Mr. Ailey, who previously visited Brazil in 1963, wound up a two-week stay with performances last weekend in Sao Paulo, the largest Brazilian city, after encountering a series of problems with the conservative administration of the Rio theater.

He saw these problems, which attracted as much attention in the newspapers here as the packed houses and repeated spectator calls for encores, as a clash between the popular orientation of his art and the "extreme form of elitism" he says he found here.

Of his audiences, Mr. Ailey said in an interview, "They were delicious all week." Brazilian reviewers upheld this view.

But of his backstage experiences he added: "We've been in Mexico, Peru, Chile and Uruguay. We haven't encountered this sort of problem anywhere else. We didn't find this kind of elitism, this kind of problem with administration. In years of touring I have never found a situation like this."

To a representative from the American consulate general, the technical and personal problems confronted by Mr. Ailey and his troupe owe to "the standard frictions whenever a company travels." The tour by the major American modern dance company was partly sponsored by the United States Department of State.

But Mr. Ailey holds differently. Customarily, his rehearsals are open to the public, and local dancers and teachers are invited to take class and give lessons on stage when his company is on tour. The municipal theater is regarded as much as a museum as a theater in Rio, not only because it dates from the turn of the century but also because it is the main cultural institution here and is considered the only practical place for a major cultural performance of any significance to be held. The audiences at the municipal, as it

is known, traditionally come from the social elite. The theater reopened in April after undergoing renovations that took two years, and many of the events it stages require male spectators to dress formally in black tie or coat and tie.

The problems for Mr. Ailey, and his consequent threat to not put on his school, first arose when a group of dancers he invited to rehearsals were barred from entering the theater one afternoon. They were allowed in after his threat.

Later, there was a dispute over such a thing as the taping of a wire to a wall. Technical problems emerged with lighting and a stage curtain that would not close. Friends whom Mr. Ailey had invited to come backstage after the opening performance were also physically kept from doing so and had to be pushed through by his impresario, Paul Szilard.

And the choreographer, who is black, stalked out of an opening night reception so enraged that he accused some of the people involved of being racists.

"It was really trying," he recalled later. "I felt a lot of rage, a lot of hurt, a

lot of anger; I mean the sort of thing you get from being in the South, I mean really put down as a person."

He added that "nobody knew I was the director of the company" when preparations for the first performances were held at the theater and that "to see a black man doing all that, I think they were taken a little aback."

Mr. Ailey repeated his assertions in numerous interviews to newspapers and television stations, few of which repeated his sense of racial hurt.

"But it got better as we went along. After we went through all this, the performance worked like a dream," he said. One local newspaper wrote of the "internal and grave problems" backstage, which it described as "surreal," and added that "they must be related to the uncommon fact that so many people at one time displayed interest in the dance in Brazil."

"We also like to reach out to the masses," the choreographer said. "They never have popular theater at the municipal and they have a right to be frightened. But I think that after this experience they won't be anymore. I don't think they will let this happen again. That's the problem."



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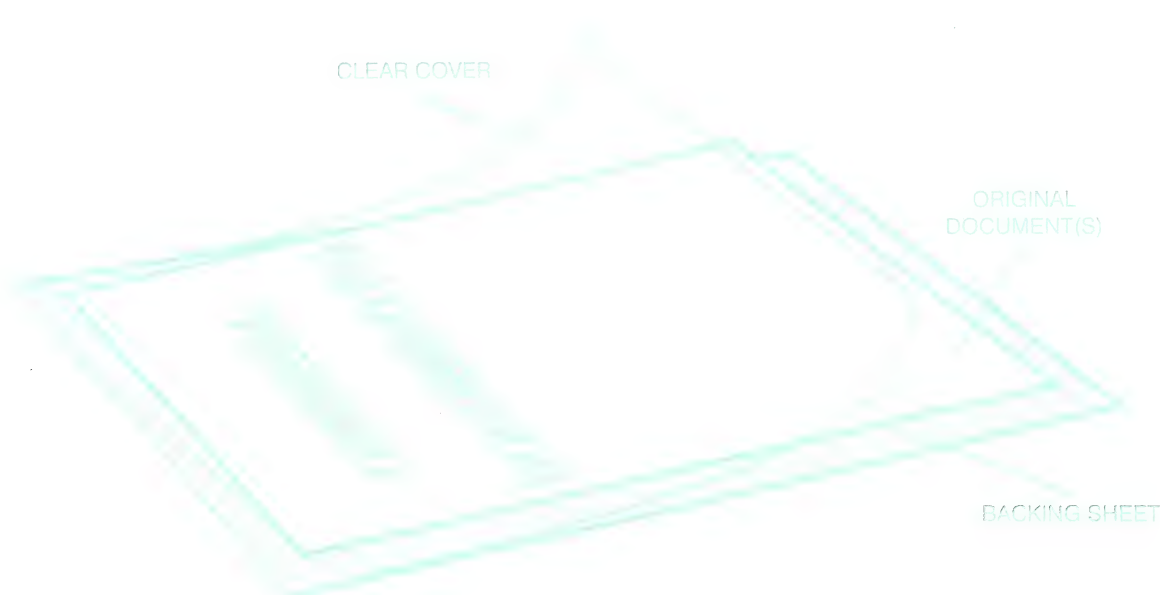
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Ballet: 'Night Creature' by Ailey

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

IT is no accident that the most famous photograph of Mikhail Baryshnikov shows him in "Pas de Duke," the one work Alvin Ailey choreographed for him a few years ago.

In this picture by Martha Swope, Mr. Baryshnikov epitomizes his dance generation. The energy and thrust that seem about to sweep him off the cover of his book "Baryshnikov at Work" are Ailey trademarks. And yet there is more soul than pattern here. Head thrown back, foot raised to march forward, arms swaggering downward — the dancer on view is a contemporary dancer, with all the angst and joy dancing in our time implies.

You will find exactly the same image recurring in Mr. Ailey's "Night Creature," which opened the three-week season of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on Wednesday night at the City Center-55th Street Theater. "Night Creature," like "Pas de Duke," is to music by Duke Ellington, and it has the same appeal to our insides that explains the universal appeal of the Baryshnikov picture.

"Night Creature" is one of Mr. Ailey's happiest works. It has a joyful pulse, a sophisticated entente with its sophisticated music that carries on the best of the Ellington tradition. A serious work, "Night Creature" is also entertaining.

The second section catches this mixture best. The dancers are all rubbery bounce. They form a wedge that moves like a distorted reflection in a funhouse mirror. We can see every hip wiggle travel up to the shoulder. On this occasion, it was Marilyn Banks who led Alistair Butler on a merry chase through the exciting ensemble, springy of foot and mean of hip thrust. Mr. Ailey injects some Thurber-like pursuit of the male species in the first section and then steers his way confidently into a jitterbug finish.

For a change of pace — and one does mean change of pace — the opening-night program was highlighted by a very different and very well-known ballet, Todd Bolender's "The Still Point." In the 50's, it was in the repertory of the New York City Ballet, a vehicle for very strong performances by Melissa Hayden and Jacques d'Amboise. In recent years, it was given by the Joffrey Ballet, and just several weeks ago, it was given at Brooklyn College by the Cincinnati Ballet.

With its consistent inclusion in the repertory of ballet companies, it is easy to forget that Mr. Bolender originally choreographed "The Still Point" for a modern-dance troupe — Emily Frankel and Mark Ryder's company in 1955. Now, in this company premiere by the Ailey dancers, "The Still Point" is for the first time in many years

danced without toe shoes — soft slippers for the women, character shoes for the men.

Using three movements of a Debussy string quartet — played vivaciously by the Primavera String Quartet — Mr. Bolender tells a simple story simply but with deep resonance. A young girl is an outsider, excluded from a group of supposed friends. Their cruelty appears not so much spiteful as the result of changing relationships. The other dancers form couples, and camera-derie falls by the wayside. Yet quietly, a young man appears, and within this still point — the title comes from T. S. Eliot — the girl finds love.

Donna Wood and Roman Brooks as the girl and the boy who understands her gave a superlative performance. It is true Miss Wood seemed at first a bit mature and much too attractive for this adolescent angst. Yet the duet that forms the second half of the ballet was danced so persuasively that it became a tender unfolding love story. Miss Wood, once with the Dayton Ballet, and Mr. Brooks, recently with the Dance Theater of Harlem, made the partnering the visual image of a study in trust.

Unlike some dancers, Miss Wood was less angry in her initial rejection of the boy. Rather marvelously, we saw her confidence deepen progressively — through the way she would sink into Mr. Brooks's arms and the nobility



The New York Times / Sandy Geis

The Alvin Ailey dancers are performing Todd Bolender's "The Still Point" in their new season at the City Center

with which he received her. April Berry, Keith McDaniel, Patricia Dingle and Kevin Brown rounded out the cast that made this "Still Point" look different and yet recognizably itself. The absence of toe work eliminates some speed but none of the requisite emotion. A welcome addition to the repertory.

Miss Wood also appeared in the role

created last spring for Judith Jamison in Ulysses Dove's "Inside (Between Love . . . and Love)." Mr. Dove scores his points by promising us a blues solo and then confounding us happily by delivering anything but the usual trite number. Miss Wood, not quite as high voltage as Miss Jamison, did manage to work herself up convincingly nonetheless. The movement is fragmented

and interesting.

Maxine Sherman gave an unusually moving performance in Mr. Ailey's elegaic and celebratory "Memoria," a tribute to the late choreographer Joyce Trisler but universal enough to be chosen as the Royal Danish Ballet's next premiere. At the close, Mr. Ailey came on stage to place a basket of flowers before Miss Sherman.



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^(ATTN: Entertainment editors)<

^By JANICE BERMAN ALEXANDER=

^(c) 1980, Newsday=

NEW YORK - To see Alvin Ailey and the empire that he built, you go to the Minskoff Building at Broadway and 45th Street and take the elevator to the eighth floor, which the Minskoff family has made available to the Ailey company at lower than commercial rates. There, a woman in a leotard and slacks is standing at the receptionist's desk. From the hall nearby, there is a subdued buzz of activity.

Meg Gordean, Alvin Ailey's spokeswoman, as she was frequently described last spring when the choreographer had his much-publicized breakdown, is going over the seating arrangements for the company's opening night Dec. 3 at City Center. Others are readying costumes, blocking out dances. Nearby, Jean Noble, advisor to the company's school, is planning the spring semester.

In his office, company manager Bill Hammond is analyzing what he calls his "hit list" of potential donors. Money to keep the company going is Hammond's province. Like most dance companies, the Ailey runs perpetually in the red. Last year, the \$4-million operation had revenues of \$2.5 million, of which \$700,000 came from the public; this year, Hammond would like the public to kick in a million.

Alvin Ailey appears, smiling and relaxed, in Hammond's doorway.

Ailey, widely regarded as a major force in the world of modern dance, spent 21 years building the labyrinthine structure that is the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, then spent seven weeks in a mental hospital last spring wondering if his days of rage had

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demolished it.

In March, he was charged with assault, resisting arrest, trespass and disorderly conduct as the result of an incident at a Columbia University dormitory, where he allegedly became violent after he demanded to see a Moroccan student, and was told the young man was not there. Ailey was sent to Bellevue Hospital for psychiatric observation, then released.

In April, he was charged with burglary and third-degree assault after he allegedly forced his way into a neighbor's apartment. It was then that he entered a private mental hospital for seven weeks. Under a conditional court release, all charges will be dismissed next April, provided that Ailey avoids further altercations and continues under a doctor's care until then. Ailey was diagnosed a manic-depressive, and is seeing a psychiatrist and taking lithium.

Alvin Ailey is tall, a bit paunchy, and comfortably rumpled-looking; Meg Gordean says she calls him "papa bear." At 49, his black beard is sprinkled with gray. A muffler dangles around his neck. He leads a visitor into his corner office with a stride that says the soaks in epsom salts must have done their work, easing the strain of rehearsals on muscles no longer accustomed to dancing.

He lowers his substantial frame into a chair behind a fragile, art-deco gold-leaf desk, donated by Lilly Dache. "I'm afraid I'm going to scratch it," he says. "Now," he says, grinning and leaning back in his chair as, through the windows behind him, the late afternoon sun bounces off the towers of Times Square, "what would you like to know about this company, about this season, about this" - his voice booms out and he opens his arms expansively - "dance world?"

With subsequent reporters, he would begin by asking, with a big smile, "What do you want to know about last spring?" But clearly, even in one of the first interviews since his illness, he is eager to talk, to put out the word that "I came out of it whole,

spiritually fine and that, by extension, so did his company of 27 dancers, who rehearse in the spacious studios on the building's ground floor.

The company will begin its 22nd year minus its veteran star, Judith Jamison, who is on leave to appear on Broadway in the upcoming "Sophisticated Lady." Jamison took over for Ailey as artistic director during the spring season, when, for the first time, he was forced to delegate his authority. Since his return, he has continued to do so. The ongoing pressures of raising funds and running the school now belong to others.

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"Since my agony of last spring," says Ailey, "I no longer think I can do it all. I decided that Alvin Ailey best serves as resident choreographer. I decided to let somebody else involve themselves with the pressures.

"During my days in the hospital I was terribly worried that the incident would destroy something that we had built for the last 20, 21 years," he says. "But the audiences, the public, the dancers and the students are very faithful to the idea... my own crisis didn't seem to denigrate the integrity of what we are about."

Today, the Ailey empire is about making and preserving dances, training dancers and, of course, performing - in New York, around the country, and in Europe.

"A lot of it (the breakdown) had to do with having grown as big as we are. Look at us - we're like General Motors! The school is my real baby." The school has 110 classes for 5,000 students a year. It provides young dancers for the second and third companies, which, in turn, have given 10 dancers to the main troupe.

As an all-black company, the troupe's repertoire - choreographed by Ailey, Donald McKayle, Joyce Trisler and others - reflected the black experience. But as it became multiracial in its makeup, Ailey included the works of modern choreographers like Jose Limon, Anna Sokolow and Ted Shawn. Ailey has said that his company's eclecticism is the result of the multi-ethnic interests of his first and most influential teacher, choreographer Lester Horton.

"I have always envisioned having dancers who are total dancers, who can do ethnic, jazz, modern, ballet," says Ailey. "I hope

more and more unusual people."

The 18 works in the fall schedule will include one revival, McKayle's "Rainbow Round My Shoulder" (1959), set to chain gang songs; one modern work widely seen in other companies, Todd Bolender's "The Still Point," and one new Ailey ballet.

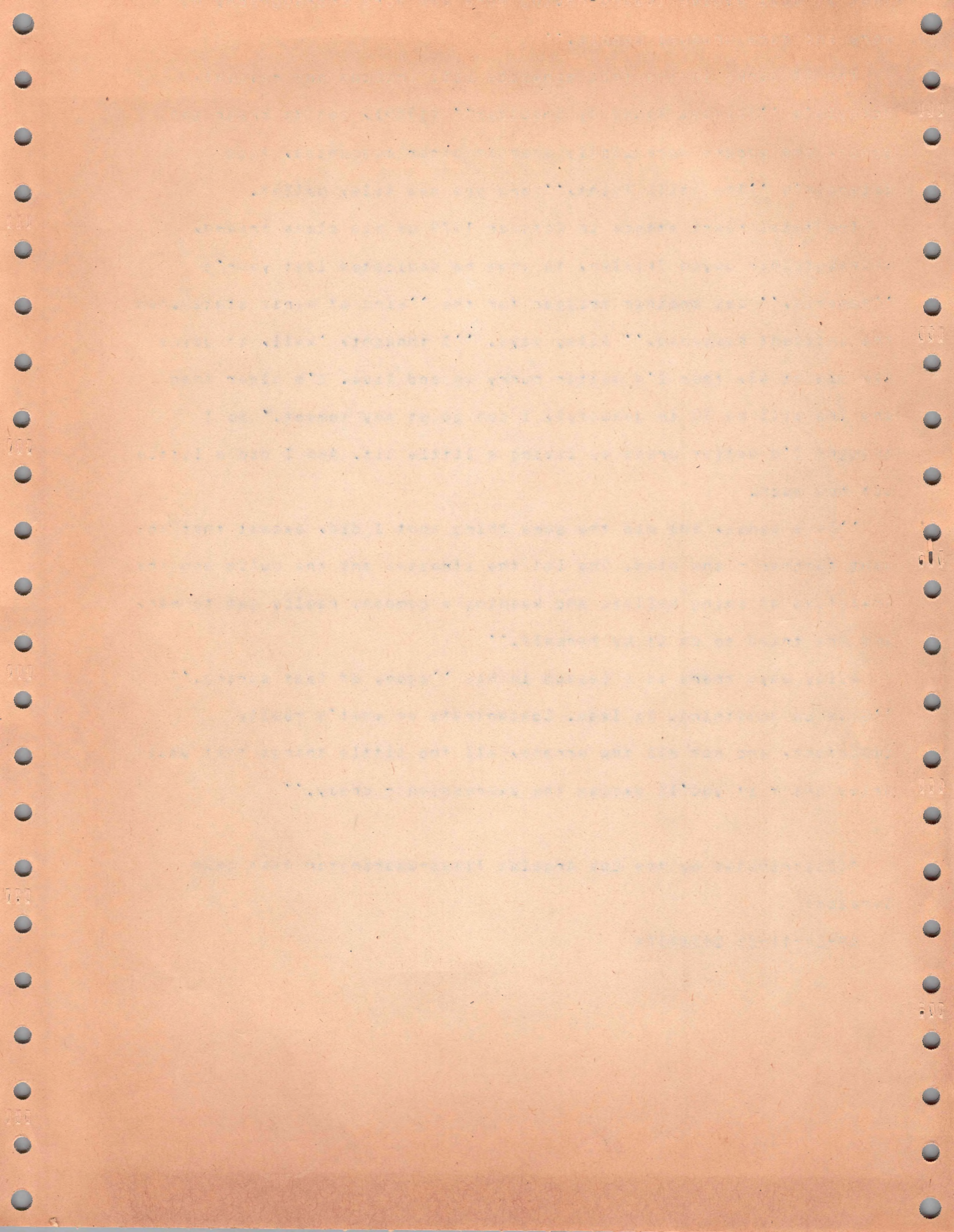
The fatal heart attack in October 1979 of his close friend, choreographer Joyce Trisler, to whom he dedicated last year's "Memoria," was another trigger for the "kind of manic state when the incident happened," Ailey says. "I thought, 'Well, if Joyce can die at 48, then I'd better hurry up and live. I'm older than she (he will be 50 in January), I can go at any moment.' So I thought I'd better press my living a little bit. And I did a little bit too much.

"In a sense, she did the same thing that I did, except that she went farther - she died. She let the stresses and the pulls and the anxieties of doing ballets and keeping a company really get to her, and she tried to do it by herself."

Ailey says there is a lesson in his "agony of last spring." "Give up something. Do less. Concentrate on what's really important, and not all the errata, all the little things that would drive one - if you'll excuse the expression - crazy."

^(Distributed by the Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service)

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Alvin Ailey

After Countless Setbacks, 'Yearning to Be Perfect Is What Dance Is All About,' Choreographer Says

By Michael Kernan

Washington Post Service

WASHINGTON — Alvin Ailey, having breakfast at Howard Johnson's, had just finished reading reviews of his dance company's opening night here. Respectful and serious, the judgments ranged from "vibrant original vision" to "engaging if modest achievements" to "total clunker."

He growled for a while and ordered scrambled eggs.

Then he laughed.

"I like a discerning audience," he said. "I don't care if everybody falls on their face at every piece, like Broadway. This isn't the Hit Parade."

He hates the Broadway everybody's-gotta-love-it mentality. He's been there. He spent all of 1969 working on a musical version of the film "La Strada," tried out in Detroit for five weeks, opened and closed in one night on Broadway. Never again.

Most of his 51 years, it seems, he has been trying to escape labels. Twenty-one years ago he choreographed a great ballet called "Revelations," based on spirituals and black folk music, and it electrified everyone who saw it. And still does.

"It follows me around everywhere," he said. "I've done it every season except one, when I just couldn't put up with it anymore and dropped it, but my board of directors said it sells tickets so put it back."

He smiled quietly. "I've learned to like it."

But Ailey is interested in what he's doing now. He has moved far beyond his original idea of a black folkloric troupe. A brilliant choreographer himself, he also has a dozen choreographers working for him, and he creates dances to George Gershwin and Steve Reich and Duke Ellington and Bartók, and is rescuing modern classics by Ted Shawn, José Limón, Lester Horton, Doris Humphrey and others.

"People always say, 'Oh, what's he doing now, Bartók? It's not his trip. Why doesn't he give us another 'Revelations'?' Esoteric works I like, yes, but I want to mix 'em with works that have immediate appeal. My background being black contributes to that, our jazz, folk songs, blues and spirituals reach out to peo-



James M. Thresher, The Washington Post

Ailey: "I like a discerning audience."

ple, so people called us commercial. We're still accused of being commercial because of jazz. In America, that is. Europe respects jazz as art."

Another thing: His company makes a point of being multiracial. The black heritage is still there, but Ailey is trying to speak to a universal audience. "The critics put you in a bag, they say only black people can do that, only black people can do the blues... Give us a break. We're 20th-century Americans."

Born to a farm family in Rogers, Texas, ("Nothing but a gas station and a church"), he soaked up blues and spirituals firsthand. At 12 he found himself in Los Angeles, a big kid, interested in gymnastics and football.

"One day I followed a most beautiful young lady to the Lester Horton dance studio in Hollywood. I'd been turned on by the whole idea that black culture could be put on the stage this way, could be dignified."

Horton, a white dance pioneer who was interested in Indian and Oriental and other ethnic dance styles, died in 1953, and Ailey became the company's choreographer, costume designer and director, producing a number of rather imitative works over the next year. Then he got a call from New York, to dance in a musical of Truman Capote's "House of Flowers" along with Carmen de Lavallade, the beautiful young

lady who had first lured him to Horton's.

He plunged into concerts and classes with Martha Graham, Limón, Humphrey, Charles Weidman and others. He danced in a few musicals, then appeared in "Jamaica" with Lena Horne.

"I decided right then that what I wanted to do was make dances," he said. "I pulled together a group of dancers from 'Jamaica' and from my schools and courses and gave a concert in New York in '58. There were seven of us. We're still at it."

Surely no American dance theater has disbanded as often as Alvin Ailey's. "We'd rehearse six months for a performance at the Y, all for that one night, and that was it. All that energy and zeal and love." After every concert, the dancers scattered to the winds. Nobody got paid, of course. They did one concert in '58, two in '59, three in '60. And in '61 they went to the Jacob's Pillow festival in Massachusetts.

"The State Department saw us there. That got us a five-month tour of Southeast Asia and kind of established us as a group and kept us together for the first time. We went to the Rio arts festival where we met European impresarios, had a three-week season in Paris, a great success, and a six-week season in London in '64, and after that we were invited back to Europe every year."

The company was still dissolv-

ing after every season. But gradually things got better. Today it has a \$4.5 million budget, 30 members, and a repertoire of 50 ballets by at least 30 major choreographers. Plus: a second company, a third company, a scholarship program, a children's program and — Ailey's pet project — a dance course for the blind.

"We make about 70 percent at the box office, and the rest has to be raised. We're running a million-dollar deficit, what with Reaganomics and all. We've cut back by \$500,000 already, which means the elimination of some artistic excellence. It really curbs your fantasies. We have a genius who does our backdrops of pure light, but we'd love to have some scenery. And live music. And something more than minimal costumes. But the spirit of the dancers is great."

Based in New York, Ailey naturally attracts many New York dancers, but others are from all over. Long-legged Keith McDaniel, whose sinuous dancing pops eyes in "Treading," was spotted at 16 in a Chicago dance class ("Look at that!" Ailey muttered at the time). He, like other soloists, also appears in the group.

"We're a rather democratic group, that way. No stars, no principals, no corps de ballet. Judy Jamison has gone off to Broadway, but she's still very much part of the family. Our dancers have a wonderful perception of themselves, a sense of who they are. A lot of choreographers have come out of our company; I'm proud of that."

Trained in classical ballet, and modern, and jazz, and the styles of Lester Horton ("a very broad, expansive technique that sort of goes outside the body, very energetic, muscular, big lines"), Graham, Shawn and others, they have become Ailey dancers. You know them by the way they use everything: arms, feet, hips, heads, even their mass presence in plastic, multihuman shapes — and by the pleasure they obviously take in their work.

"They'll be over there on the stage at 3 this afternoon," Alvin Ailey said. "Trying to perfect tonight's program. Even now. Constantly seeking perfection. Trying to make something fine. Yearning to be perfect is what dance is all about."

